



The Kentucky State Arsenal: Workhorse of a Building



During the Civil War, the arsenal served as a cartridge factory. Women factory workers handled gunpowder to make cartridges for the muskets issued to United States Army troops.

Harper's Weekly, July 20, 1861
Provided Courtesy HarpWeek, LLC



Photographs showing the daily life of workers at the arsenal are rare. Here, workers load a truck with tents, cots, and garbage cans.

Workers at State Arsenal, April 30, 1914
Kentucky Historical Society Collections

The men and materiel of the State Arsenal have been called into both domestic and foreign service. In 1864, the arsenal was critical in the defense of Frankfort against Confederate attack. During several crises in the early twentieth century, guardsmen were dispatched from the arsenal on missions to maintain civil order and provide disaster relief. As during the Civil War, soldiers received equipment from the arsenal for the Spanish-American War (1898) and the Mexican border campaign (1916-1917). After World War I (1914-1918), the arsenal returned to its primary use as munitions storage and warehouse.

Although ordered to protect the commonwealth and placed at the arsenal, this mobile gun proved unreliable. In fact, this example was never used in the line of duty.

Billingshurst-Requa volley gun, 1864
Kentucky Historical Society Collections



KentuckyMilitaryHistoryMuseum

AT THE OLD STATE ARSENAL

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